The Department of Music

of

The University of Alberta

presents a

PIANO & VIOLIN RECITAL

with

JANET SCOTT HOYT, PIANO

and

NORMAN NELSON, VIOLIN

Thursday, March 14, 1985 at 8:00 p.m.

Convocation Hall, Old Arts Building

PROGRAMME

Sonata No. 3 in E Major (BWV 1016) for
Obligato Harpsichord and Violin (1720) . . . . . J. S. Bach
(1685-1750)

(Bass Continuo: MARK EELES, cello)

Adagio
Allegro
Adagio ma non tanto
Allegro

Sonata for Violin and Piano (1949) . . . . . William Walton
(1902-1983)

Allegro tranquillo
Variazioni

INTERMISSION

Sonata No. 9 in A Major, Op. 47
("Kreutzer") (1803) . . . . . Ludwig Van Beethoven
(1770-1827)

Adagio sostenuto; Presto
Andante con variazioni
Finale; Presto

Rodolphe Kreutzer's father hailed from Silesia and became a French Army musician, later to be posted to Versailles. It was there that Rodolphe was born in 1776. He betrayed at the earliest age such interest in the violin that his father began to train him. This education was later continued by a German, Anton Stamitz of Mannheim, who was living in Paris at that time and teaching the violin. Finally, Kreutzer was taught by Viotti, who had such a high opinion of the young man that he made him a soloist in his "Theatre Italien".

Kreutzer, who had previously been a member of the royal private band, was appointed Violin Professor at the Paris Conservatoire after Viotti had left the town. Subsequently he became concert-master at the Grand Opera. One day he had to take over the baton from the conductor, and conducted with such ability that Napoleon made him the assistant to the first opera conductor, Habeneck.

From that time, Rodolphe Kreutzer played an important part in the musical life of Paris. As a composer, he was most versatile and gifted; he wrote about forty operas which were all produced, and were all more or less successful, apart from a great mass of chamber music and nineteen violin concertos. His Forty-two Etudes, however, are recognized today as his most important contribution to violin music. As a side-line, he was the leader of the Tuileries orchestra. From time to time he made very successful concert tours, and - last, but not least - he was a brilliant teacher; all of which is more than enough to gain him everlasting fame.

As a violinist, Kreutzer was, according to the unanimous opinion of his contemporaries, an artist in whom warmth of feeling and liveliness were mixed in happy harmony. He was considered up to Viotti's standard, and almost equalled him in the sweetness of his cantilene and the broad, full tone of his Allegro. Almost; for Viotti was his superior in the mastery of the bow. Unfortunately, Kreutzer's bowing was somewhat monotonous. He was less elegant in style than his great rival, Pierre Rode, obeying instinct only, which gave his playing great impetuosity and fervour.

His violin concertos, now used mainly as teaching material, are impressive because of the majesty of the themes of their introductory movements, their tender adagios and animated finales.

On one of his concert tours, Kreutzer visited Vienna, where he made friends with Beethoven. His playing must have made a great impression on the composer, as he dedicated his sonata, Op.47, to him, and it became known as the Kreutzer Sonata. It is interesting to note that Beethoven had originally written his work for the mulatto, Bridgetower, whose training was sponsored by the Prince of Wales and who went to Vienna in 1802; there, he created a sensation in aristocratic circles, not only because of the personality of his patron, but also because of his ardent and intuitive style of playing. Beethoven wrote his beautiful A Major Sonata, Op.30, for Bridgetower, accompanying him on the piano at the first performance on 24 May 1802. Beethoven's friendship with Bridgetower is said to have abated somewhat, and for this reason Kreutzer had the luck to have the most passionate of Beethoven's violin sonatas dedicated to him. Unfortunately, Kreutzer did not prize this honour sufficiently high, as will be seen later on.

In 1810 he was unlucky enough to break his left arm, so that he could not appear as soloist any longer, and his activities were limited to teaching, conducting, and composing. In 1826, whilst acting as second conductor of the Paris Grand Opera, he was pensioned off. He had just completed his last opera, Mathilde, intended as a farewell offering to the Paris public. The management, however, refused it, which caused Kreutzer to become so excited that he had a stroke. After his recovery he left "ungrateful France" and went to Geneva, where he is buried. A tablet on the wall of a house in the Promenade St. Antoine reminds passers-by that Rodolphe Kreutzer died there on 6 January 1831. In the house next door, Rodolphe Toepffer, Geneva's great poet, lived and died, and the last house in the street was in 1835-6 the refuge of Franz Liszt and his romantic love, Madame d'Agoult.

Kreutzer's operas are now completely forgotten, his violin concertos are almost forgotten; but in his Forty-two Etudes his name will live for ever. No violinist can afford to omit learning this magnificent work, for Kreutzer's exercises are not only indispensable to the acquisition of a solid technique; they combine ingenious utility with a musical ability that makes each of them a perfect masterpiece. Rode's Twenty-four Caprices may be more imaginative and their themes more original, but they are only a welcome supplement to the Kreutzer exercises, whose intrinsic possibilities are inexhaustible. They can always set new tasks even to accomplished artists, and the saying is still true that "You can't escape Kreutzer all your life".